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SUBJECT: JOWZJAN - JUNE 2008 SIX MONTH UPDATE

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Security in the northern province of Jowzjan has improved over the past six months, at least partly due to efforts of the new governor, Hashem Zari. Some districts bordering Tajikistan remain insecure because of smuggling and other insurgency-related criminal activity. Dostum's recent clash in Kabul with the Turkmen leader Akbar Bay does not seem to concern most people in the province. Drought has caused significant problems in both grain production and animal grazing. Governor Zari is negotiating grazing rights with neighboring Turkmenistan. The Provincial Council works well with both Governor Zari and Kabul's line ministry representatives. Governor Zari has established a strong, positive role in the province since his appointment in November 2007. He has strong relations with all provincial authorities, including the newly appointed chief of the National Directorate of Security.

Security: Calm and Improving

¶2. (SBU) Jowzjan is calm and security has improved over the last six months despite potential inter-ethnic conflict and rival political parties. Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG) reportedly contributes to increased instability in the remote districts of Qushtepa and Darzab. Local support for extremists and ongoing criminal activity in those districts may cause deterioration in security, linked to the neighboring districts of Belcheragh and Sayyd, in Faryab and Sar-e-Pul provinces, respectively.

¶3. (SBU) The northern border district of Qarqin remains vulnerable due to smuggling of drugs and weapons, and potential insurgent or anti-GIROA activity driven by Turkmen minority movements. Most insurgent activity is limited to recruitment, propaganda and smuggling.

¶4. (SBU) Dostum's recent clash in Kabul with Turkmen leader Akbar Bay and the Afghan government's reaction to the incident did not have a strong impact in Jowzjan. Local political leaders, including Junbesh party leaders, downplayed the incident. While many in Jowzjan province, especially ethnic Uzbeks, consider Dostum the "founding father" of Junbesh and the Uzbek "national hero" of liberation, most say Dostum's clash with Bay and Karzai is not relevant to daily life in Jowzjan.

Development: Drought Has Affected Agriculture

¶5. (SBU) Jowzjan's primarily agricultural and rain-fed economy has been significantly impacted by drought. Governor Zari is discussing potential temporary grazing rights with Turkmenistan. Reportedly, meat prices dropped during the spring because of oversupply

resulting from farmers slaughtering cattle due to lack of animal feed.

¶6. (SBU) Sheberghan city is the only major urban area in the province. Industry is limited, although U.S. assistance is targeted at reviving oil production and processing around Sheberghan. Underemployment continues to drive farmers to urban centers and young men to Pakistan or Iran, usually leaving their families behind. Turkmen communities weave carpets, which is often the major source of income in these rural areas.

¶7. (SBU) According to Provincial Council (PC) members and some political leaders, work on getting the central government's approval and funding of the Provincial Development Plan is progressing well, partly thanks to Governor Zari's efforts to connect the PC members with ministries and parliamentarians in Kabul. The Governor organized several trips to Kabul for PC members and other provincial elders to meet with President Karzai and ministry representatives.

Governance: New Governor Starts Well

¶8. (SBU) Hashem Zari became governor in November 2007 after a six-month vacancy following the abrupt departure of Juma Khan Hamdard in May 2007. Zari gets along well with the PC, most line ministry directors, and most political players in the province, although there appears to be tension between him and Deputy Governor Faquir. Zari always emphasizes his political independence and walks a fine line between old Dostum supporters and other players in the province. There are some indications that he may favor Junbesh, as he seems to have bureaucratically hindered the establishment of a Jamiat political office in Sheberghan. The power struggle between

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Dostum and his rivals in the region seems to be slowly fading, although any movement to limit Dostum's position could quickly instigate new problems, especially if Dostum decides to mobilize the network of sub-commanders he still controls.

¶9. (SBU) Jowzjan's PC functions independently and cooperates well with Governor Zari and the line ministries. All of the PC members are active in discussions and are well informed about the line ministries' work and the Provincial Development Plan's priorities.

¶10. (SBU) The Provincial Chief of Police faces difficult challenges with district police chiefs who are rumored to be selling weapons to insurgents or criminals. Relations between the police and the National Directorate for Security (NDS) have improved since the appointment of a new NDS director, a Jamiat supporter.

WOOD